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**From:** Macy, Jim [jim.macy@nebraska.gov]  
**Sent:** 3/16/2021 8:33:29 PM  
**To:** Cozad, David [Cozad.David@epa.gov]  
**Subject:** FW: UNMC Center of Public Health Reference

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**From:** Felix, Carla <carla.felix@nebraska.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 16, 2021 3:30 PM  
**To:** Macy, Jim <jim.macy@nebraska.gov>; Wolff, Cheryl <cheryl.wolff@nebraska.gov>  
**Subject:** UNMC Center of Public Health Reference

FYI

OWH Midlands Voices: Nebraska's 'Flint moment' has arrived; the state must provide solutions

Issues around the chemical contamination at the AltEn ethanol plant in Mead, Nebraska, raise major environmental concerns for Nebraskans. As a retired physician, I am angry and depressed. This contamination should not have happened and may cause significantly health effects.

Last year I made a significant donation to the College of Public Health (COPH) and the University of Nebraska to develop programs related to water quality and health. That has now become the Center for Water, Climate, and Health, working across campuses researching environmental effects on health.

I have been amazed by the obvious contaminants in our water, plastics, but more importantly invisible ones. In Nebraska, you can find nitrates, herbicides, pesticides, antibiotics, antidepressants, opioids and more. Some are due to agricultural and industrial practices; others flush down the toilet. Many of these chemicals last forever.

Sadly, Nebraska is a hot spot for pediatric brain tumors, leukemia and Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and certain birth defects, particularly in rural areas. It is also a hot spot for adult cancers and Parkinson's disease. Is the cause in the water?

These things informed my decision to fund the Center. Also, the events in Flint, Michigan, greatly influenced me. The Flint community was exposed to toxic levels of lead for years because of a criminal failure by elected and appointed officials to maintain a safe public water system and denial of scientific evidence of dangerous lead levels. There is no safe level of lead for the developing brain. Developmental delays, mild or severe, are insidious, causing a lifetime of disability, costs and frustrations. I know; I have a learning disability. Nitrates and pesticides also effect the developing brain. The American Academy of Pediatrics has advocated for the ban of certain pesticides.

On Jan. 10, there was an article in the Guardian, a British paper, about environmental contamination from AltEn ethanol plant in Mead. Subsequently there have been multiple articles in The World-Herald. AltEn used discarded treated seeds instead of corn to produce ethanol. That seed was treated with fungicides and pesticides. Consequently, there are huge mounds of leftover mash containing massive amounts of chemicals. As I was reading the article, I thought: Oh my god! This is our Flint moment! People in the community of Mead had been complaining for years (2017) about smells, human and animal illnesses. Bees had been dying en masse (2017) at the neighboring NU research site.

AltEn exhibited wanton disregard for the community and environment. State regulations seem lax regarding the use of treated seed. Government regulators seemed slow to respond and ineffective in their enforcement until very recently. According to what I have read, there were plenty of tests showing very high levels of contamination. Contaminants can spread through water, dust and soil. Neonicotinoids, the most prominent pesticide found at the site, are known to affect the neurologic system of bees, neurologic and reproductive systems in deer and probably developmental abnormalities in infants. Pipes broke in February, releasing millions of gallons of manure- and pesticide-laden water into the adjacent stream. If I lived downstream, I would get my well checked.

Citizens should have reasonable expectations of living a healthy life in a safe environment. To the people of Mead, know that there are people seriously thinking about you across the University of Nebraska. I personally gave funding last week

to the CPH specifically to start evaluating the health effects of this contamination. It will not happen immediately, but people are organizing and looking for additional federal science funding. If others are interested in funding this, please reach out the University of Nebraska Foundation (800-432-3216) or the College of Public Health.

I would also contact elected officials to enact laws that prevent such egregious contamination. I would write the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy and ask them what happened, where were they? What were they doing in 2017? Could this happen next in your town?

*Anne M. Hubbard, M.D., is a professor emeritus at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. She is a member of the board of directors of the University of Nebraska Foundation.*